

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

2012 COOK INLET PACIFIC COD SEASONS CLOSE DECEMBER 31

2012 COOK INLET PARALLEL PACIFIC COD SEASON OPENS JANUARY 1

EO # 2-GF-H-01-13

The 2012 Cook Inlet Area (CI) parallel Pacific cod season closes to pot and longline gear and the state-waters Pacific cod season closes to jig gear at midnight December 31, 2012. The parallel Pacific cod season immediately opens to all legal gear types January 1, 2013. A parallel Pacific cod season is established via emergency order (EO) to coincide with the season dates and gear types set by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the initial Pacific cod season in the adjacent federal Central Gulf of Alaska Regulatory Area (CGOA). Fishermen are reminded that all fish must be landed within 24 hours following the closure of the 2012 season and prior to participating in the 2013 season. The parallel Pacific cod season will close by EO for each gear type to coincide with respective gear sector closures in the federal CGOA.

Fishermen are reminded: 1) to obtain a CI **non-exclusive area registration** from ADF&G prior to fishing; 2) of the requirement for fishermen using pot or longline gear in parallel Pacific cod fisheries to have a functioning, activated, NMFS-approved **vessel monitoring system** (VMS) as described at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/ak_faqs.html; and, 3) to adhere to the federal **seabird avoidance measures** (SAM) which are required in all longline fisheries for groundfish in the North Gulf District of the Cook Inlet Area. Additional information describing SAM can be found at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/guide.htm>.

NMFS has implemented a **new Observer Program for 2013** which changes how observers are deployed, how the program is funded, and the pool of vessels and processors covered under the program. Vessel operators participating in directed halibut and/or state-water parallel and GHL groundfish fisheries are encouraged to become familiar with how they may be affected by this new federal program. Information and frequently asked questions on the restructured observer program can be found at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/observers/> or by contacting the Observer Program office in Seattle at: (206) 526-4195 or (206) 526-4194.

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Regulation 5AAC 28.350 (b) closes certain waters on the west side of Cook Inlet and within Kachemak Bay to groundfish pot gear (Figure 1). Two rookeries within the Cook Inlet Area, Outer (Pye) Island and Sugarloaf Island remain closed to fishing with pot or longline gear during a parallel Pacific cod season to protect Steller sea lions. Waters within three nautical miles (nmi) of these locations are closed to vessel transit and waters within 10 nmi of these locations are closed to fishing with fixed gear via emergency order. Contact NMFS in Kodiak at ph: (907) 481-1780 or consult the NMFS website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/regs/679b22.pdf>.

Bycatch, in aggregate, may not exceed 20% by round weight of the directed groundfish species on board the vessel. Regulation 5 AAC 28.365 requires that all rockfish must be retained and any rockfish bycatch in excess of the 10% rockfish bycatch allowance be reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket. No rockfish landing or combination of landings may exceed the 5-day trip limits of 4,000 pounds from the North Gulf District and 1,000 pounds from the Cook Inlet District. Lingcod may not be retained prior to July 1.

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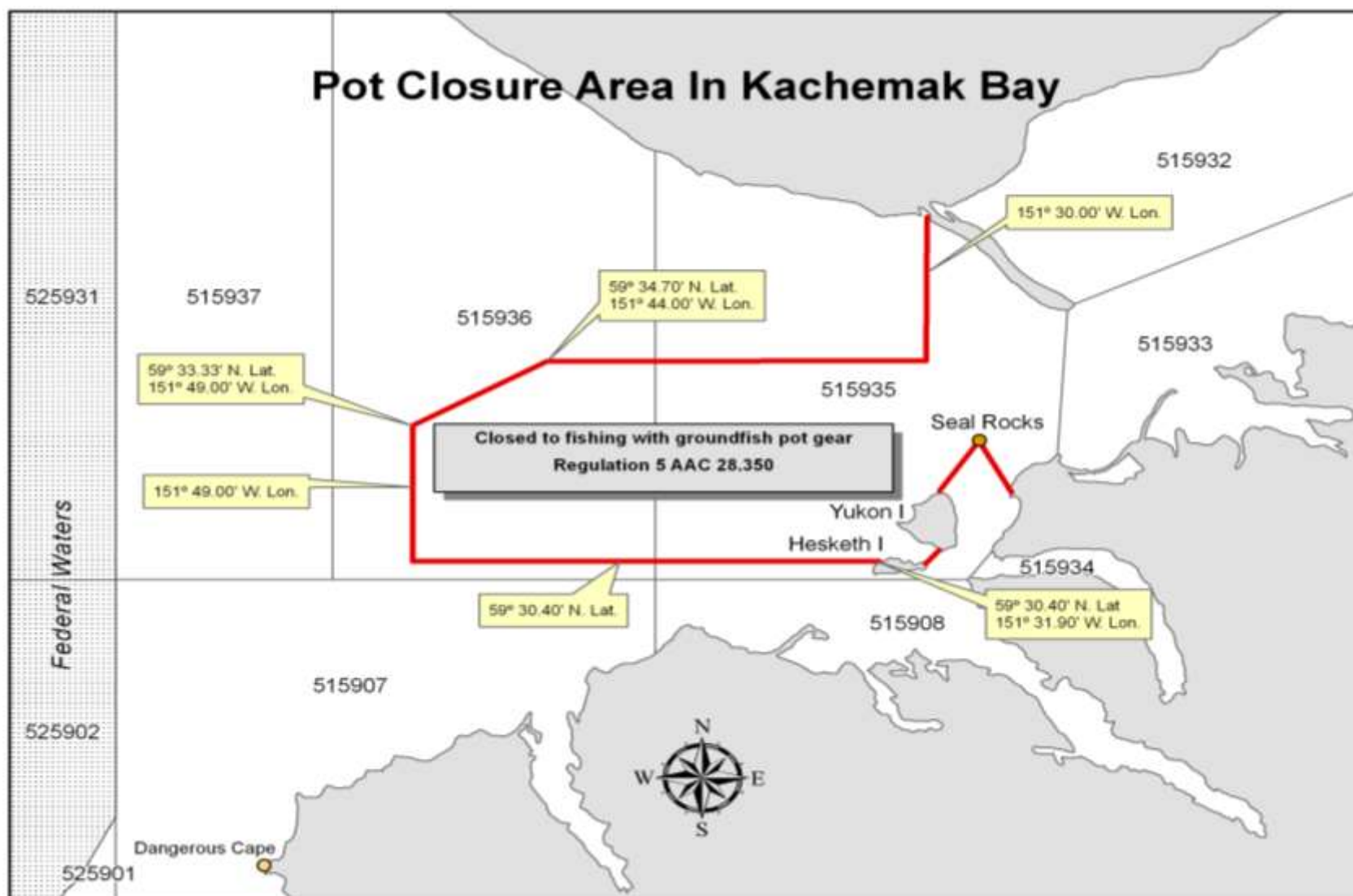


Figure 1. Kachemak Bay groundfish pot closure area with coordinates.

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